

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

EXTENSION



From the
Communication, Information, and Technology Staff
Extension Service, USDA
Rm. 3328-S. Bldg., Washington, DC 20250-0900
FAX 202-475-5289
Phone 202-447-6145

April 1990 (Issue 2)

NOV 27 1991
LIBRARY
SERIALS
BRANCH

Rural Information Center Coordinators Meet at National AG Library

Eldon Fredericks

Representatives from more than 30 states gathered at the National Agricultural Library (NAL) April 24-26 for the Rural Information Center (RIC) state coordinator conference. RIC, a joint Extension Service (ES) and NAL project, provides easily accessible information on technical questions for rural officials. RIC was conceived and begun as an ES-USDA National Initiative Team project under the Revitalizing Rural America (RRA) National Initiative, chaired by Bob Lovan. Patricia John, RIC National Coordinator, says each state has a designated local RIC coordinator, who is usually an Extension faculty or staff member.

Finders, Keepers, But Not Interpreters

Joe Howard, NAL director, said in his opening remarks, "Librarians know where information is stored and they are trained to find it." However, he stressed that users should not expect librarians to interpret information. Howard also announced that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will add funding to support RIC beginning in October 1990. This collaborative effort will increase RIC's capacity to handle requests for information about rural health and medical services.

Myron Johnsrud, ES administrator, described the conception and evolution of RIC over the past 3 years: "What began as an add-on from Extension and NAL funding now has some Congressional ap-

propriations, the support of other concerned USDA agencies and cabinet-level federal departments." Citing the need for the public to have multiple access to knowledge available in our public institutions, Johnsrud challenged RIC coordinators to stretch their institutions to make such access possible.

Data Must Be Transformed

In his look to the future, Johnsrud hopes for many partners beyond NAL and ES. This will likely cause some "identity crises," or maybe even some "healthy mergers!" He says RIC and other information centers can provide data; but we need Extension educators to manipulate those data into educational programs and information useful for decisionmaking. "The information center

concept represents a philosophical change in how we make education available to our clients," Johnsrud said. "But the center can also help Extension professionals. Researchers and educators can access RIC's huge collection of data and initiate literature searches..." (at little or no cost to state cooperators).

Contact Your RIC Coordinator

From a communication, information, and technology standpoint, state communication leaders and computer coordinators may wish to contact their local RIC coordinators or access the system themselves. For a list of the local coordinators, or more information about RIC, contact Bob Lovan at 202-447-2805.

Michigan State's Annual Report Worth Reading

Michigan State University's (MSU) *Annual Report 1989, Outreach Communications*, is well worth the read. This comprehensive summary covers every MSU com-

munication effort—in publications, news, and promotion. Segmented categories run from publications displays and formats to news and promotion of College

Week's recognition of the special needs of working women to network coverage of their Great Lakes shipwreck stories.

For a copy, contact Maxine Ferris, director,

Outreach Communications, MSU, 310 Agricultural Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824-1039; telephone: 517-336-1555.

M

Meet CIT

Eldon E. (Fred) Fredericks, former head of agricultural communication at Purdue University, has been a CIT staff member since October 1989. He is our senior education technology specialist on a year-long IPA assignment.

Hoosier Turned Temporary "Fed"

Except for a few scattered assignments in other places, Fred has been a Hoosier for much of his life. He was Purdue's Ag Comm head from November 1981 until coming to Washington; his B.S. and M.S. degrees are from Purdue; and he will return to Purdue as an information technology specialist when he completes his IPA assignment here.

His "outside Indiana" stints were from 1967 to 1977, when he was a faculty member in the Ag Journalism Department at the University of Minnesota, and from 1977 to 1980, when he served as communication leader at Michigan State University. He also held a previous 10-month IPA appointment with the Science and Education Administration information staff in 1981.

Concentrating on Technology for Education

During his assignment with CIT he is concentrating on effective use of information technology (IT) in Extension education. Specific goals during the year include: developing policy on the use of presentation standards for print

and electronic information within the Extension Service and USDA; attempting to include ES Washington staff in the national, high-speed computer communications network; supporting and encouraging use of Extension "Sampler" CD-ROM; helping develop an overall IT strategy agency-wide policy recommendation.

Getting New Expertise

Fred is a member and past president of the Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE). He received their Award of Excellence in Computers in 1987. He and wife Marsha flew their conventional suburban West Lafayette nest to reside in a concrete and steel aerie in Crystal City,



VA, near the end of a National Airport runway. By the time Fred leaves us, he'll be an expert in aircraft identification as well!

G N C

Shares Product Survey

In its April 16 issue, *Government Computer News* (GCN) staff writer **Jim Shields** reports on hard-disk optimization software (utilities) preferences, compiled as a result of the periodical's recent product preference survey. This segment of the survey, part of a ques-

tionnaire mailed to 2,000 federal GCN readers, generated 656 responses.

The GCN Product Preference Survey is designed to give buyers detailed quantitative data on specific computer and communications products as rated by federal users. The survey also measures the relative importance of

product attributes in the selection of those products.

Norton Gets Top Rating

Pitted against PC Tools Deluxe, Mace Utilities, Vopt, and Disk Optimizer, Norton Utilities Advanced Edition came out ahead of the others in 6 out of 10

capability categories and the overall weighted rating. Vopt took honors in the Speed category; PC Tools Deluxe in User Interface, Online Help, and Value categories.

For a copy of the survey score comparison chart, call **Jodi Horigan** at 202-447-6145.

S

atellite Calendar Now on CES-NET

A calendar of upcoming Extension satellite programs is now available

via CES-NET as **Bulletin 3**. This Guide for Satellite Educational Programming is updated each month by

the University of Missouri. If you know of upcoming programs that should be added to the data base, call

James Summers, director, Office of Evaluation Studies, University of Missouri, at 314-882-2243.

In our March Issue 1, in "Water Quality Communications—Front and Center," page 1, we made the statement, "A set of the

materials is being sent to all state youth and communications staff and to WQ coordinators in the near future." Not so. The statement should have

read, "A set of materials will be put in the new National Agricultural Library Water Quality Information Center, and a copy of the bibliog-

raphy of these materials sent to all state youth and communications staff and to Water Quality coordinators in the near future."

Writing Coach Offers Ten Commandments

At the recent 27th Agricultural Communications Conference at the University of Missouri-Columbia, writing coach **Harry Levins**, columnist with the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, offered "Ten Commandments of Good Newspaper Writing." Here are the first five:

Commandment No. 1— Use short words.

Almost all of us learned English at our mothers' knees, and she used short, Anglo-Saxon words. In fact, most of the thousand or so truly basic words we use—words like "house" and "sun" and "mother"—come from Anglo-Saxon, which in turn, came from German.

In grade school, however, we began to use a second version of English—Latinate English. Now, whenever we pull up to a keyboard, we often use those windy Latinate

words. When we write, we never write "buy." We always write "purchase." We never write "key." We always write "significant." We never write "big," or "wide," or "heavy." We always write "extensive." "An extensive storm extensively damaged an extensive area of Missouri Monday."

Commandment No. 2— Write short sentences.

All things being equal, short sentences go down better with breakfast. While we don't assume our readers lack the sophistication to deal with long sentences, we do assume that at 7:00 a.m., readers want their prose over easy.

Commandment No. 3— Write short stories.

Think about the context of most newspapers. The stories are set in tiny type. They are in narrow columns, and printed on

cheap paper. Then the newspaper's deliverer hurls this product on the lawn—or the roof—at one of the busiest times of the day.

Is a newspaper an investment? No. It's a throwaway item. Make one day's stories long and dull, and people will throw it away without reading it. Television is easier.

Commandment No. 4— Use strong verbs.

The weakest verb in any language is any form of the verb "to be." It's weak because nothing happens; things merely exist. Yet, we fill our papers with "to be." Sometimes, nothing else will work. But as often as not, a little bit of thinking will add a lot of punch.

"She is in need of a heart transplant."

"She needs a heart transplant."

"Jones is a truck driver."

"Jones drives a truck."

Commandment No. 5— Use specific nouns.

When returning from the scene of an event, the reporter carries in mind a finely focused mental image. Everything stands out clearly, vividly. But an inexperienced reporter may sit down at a keyboard and utterly forget that readers read stories, not minds. Take the following statement: "The car was totalled." What does this tell the reader? Not much. Was it a junker to begin with? Is the total loss \$65?

On the other hand, "The 1989 Jaguar was totalled" makes the reader grimace with sympathetic pain. Treating "1989 Jaguar" as the total noun automatically lets the reader do an instant estimate and realize the extent of the loss.

[Continued in May (Issue 1) *CITE* Extension]

D

ean Becomes TV Personality

For 35 continuous years, *Across the Fence*, a daily television show produced by the University of Vermont Extension Service and Agricultural Experiment Station, has kept Vermont farmers up to date on things agricultural. The new **Dean of Agriculture and Life Sciences Donald McLean**, wanted to educate

viewers about the Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension Service, including missions and functions.

Brings Viewers to Labs and Offices

McLean hosted several on-location programs highlighting Experiment Station research projects; and he just completed tapings

at Vermont Extension's 14 county offices. He is now working with the program's producer, **Lyn Jarvis**, on a series of telecasts to show how agricultural research is applied by Extension faculty on farms throughout the state.

"We feel these programs have really helped people understand how the Agricultural Experiment

Station and Extension Service can assist them and their families," says McLean. "Now that they know the services we offer, I want to move to the next step and show how Experiment Station and Extension work together in providing education and assistance to the people of Vermont."

E

xtension Echoes

From Minnesota...The University of Minnesota Extension Service (MES) Telecommunications Data Center newsletter, *TechNotes*, reports completion of a Minnesota Extension Service Agriculture CD-ROM containing the full-text, graphics, and photographs of over 500 MES publications. This is in addition to their joint CD-ROM project with NAL and Virginia Tech.

Also included on this disc are the Social Sciences in Forestry index, abstracting over 10,000 publications from

1985-89, over 20 MES computer software programs, and more than 150 electronic clip art images from MES's *Visual Fairness Clip Art Handbook*.

From the North Central Region Educational Materials Project...**Don Esslinger** (Missouri) no sooner unpacked from 5 weeks in Swaziland teaching technical writing workshops, when he began to repack for a 2-year assignment in Cairo, Egypt, beginning in June.

Sources

Government Computer News, Washington, DC, April 1990
TechNews, University of Minnesota, April 1990
North Central Region Educational Materials Project Newsletter, April 1990.

Contributors —April 1990 (Issue 2)

Judith Bowers
Jodi Horgan
Harry Levins

Stu Sutherland
Tom Willis

CITExtension Publication Staff

Managing Editor	Janet Poley
Editor	Jodi Horgan
Design	Tom Poore
Reproduction/Distribution	Joyce Calvaruso
Staff Artist	Myron Johnson

Mention or display of a trademark, proprietary product, or firm in text or figures does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and does not imply approval to the exclusion of other suitable products or firms.